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Heads in the Sand on CIA?

(Washington Post)

"THE LIFE of spies is to know, not to be known," George Herbert wrote in 1640, and for over 300 years it held true—with some notable exceptions, most of whom made the mistake of being caught and executed.

But as the Cold War has become more and more an accepted fact of life, so has spying, and so have the men who ply this distasteful craft.

As a result we find the Russians honoring their spy, Col. Rudolf Abel, on a television program; U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers has been given a secret medal with a secret citation in a secret ceremony by the CIA; and former CIA executives Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell recently discussed and firmly defended "the science of spying" on a network television program.

According to John Chancellor, narrator of the program, spying now means "using tanks and planes and men to promote our policies and sometimes to overthrow governments which we don't like."

To illustrate the point, a former U. S. air attache to Guatemala told of becoming party to a plot to hire gangsters to kill or assassinate Communists there, and a British freighter was said to have been accidentally sunk by a CIA plane.

These and other incidents are ascribed aboard to the U. S. A.; within the United States, if they become known, they are ascribed to the CIA. Yet Allen Dulles says "at no time has the CIA engaged in any political activity or intelligence that was not approved at the highest level."

If it is an "invisible govern-

ment" that is wielding this power, the visible government—the Congress—must certainly carry a heavy share of the blame. Congressmen, it seems, "don't want to know" what the CIA is doing.

Such a head-in-the-sand attitude may protect an individual conscience or reputation, but claims of ignorance do little to preserve the United States' reputation abroad when the CIA is implicated in plots or coups.

With Communist pressure upon the Free World showing no signs of slackening, with Congress exercising less influence upon foreign policy and with continued erosion of the assumption that "we don't do that kind of thing," it is more urgent than ever that Congress implement the 1956 Hoover Commission recommendation by establishing a Joint Committee on Foreign Intelligence.